



10480 Little Patuxent Parkway, Ste 910, Columbia, MD 21044. Office 410-992-4258. Fax: 410-992-7732. [www.marylandpsychology.org](http://www.marylandpsychology.org)

February 10, 2021

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Delegate Shane Pendergrass, Chair  
House Health and Government Operations Committee  
Room 241, House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Bill:** HB0551- Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance – Coverage and Reimbursement of Telehealth Services

**Position: Support**

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, would like to offer its strong support for House Bill 551. HB551 recognizes the important role of telehealth in the healthcare delivery system, patient/client choice, and parity for mental health care. Telehealth has proved to be an effective platform for treatment of many health/mental health care conditions. Research has demonstrated that the provision of health services through telehealth is as effective as provision through in-person meetings for many conditions.

Telehealth allows increased access to care for all individuals and is especially useful in reducing barriers to care for the underserved and those who live in rural areas. HB551 maintains specific provisions which have been temporarily allowed during this Public Health Emergency. For example, HB551:

- **Removes specific originating site requirements** which limits access to care (e.g., patients can receive appropriate services at home or another appropriate location);
- **Allows for the continuation of service delivery through audio-only** means when deemed appropriate – this is a critical access to care issue given that many individuals do not have access to computers or other electronic devices and thereby would otherwise suffer an unintended discrimination by being unable to receive needed services via telehealth;
- **Supports appropriate access to care** by requiring insurance companies and other payers to reimburse telehealth services at the same rate and under the same conditions as if they were delivered in person.

This bill also places in the hands of the consumer how they would like to receive their care or in many instances provides the only way they can receive care. For these, and many other reasons, the Maryland Psychological Association asks for a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 551.

Please feel free to contact MPA's Executive Director Stefanie Reeves at [exec@marylandpsychology.org](mailto:exec@marylandpsychology.org) if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

*Esther Finglass*  
Esther Finglass, Ph.D.  
President

*R. Patrick Savage, Jr.*  
R. Patrick Savage, Jr.  
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association  
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs